

***Melychiopharis*: an atypical orb-weaving spider from South America (Araneae: Araneidae)**

ADALBERTO J. SANTOS^{1*}, ANTONIO D. BRESCOVIT^{1**} & HERBERT W. LEVI²

¹ Laboratório de Artrópodes, Instituto Butantan, Av. Vital Brasil 1500, CEP 05503-900, São Paulo, SP, Brazil;
*oxyopes@yahoo.com, **anyphaenidae@butantan.gov.br

² Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, 26 Oxford Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02138-2902.

Abstract

The monotypic genus *Melychiopharis* Simon is transferred from Theridiidae to Araneidae, based mainly on characteristics of the male palp. *Melychiopharis cynips* Simon 1895 is redescribed and illustrated, including the first illustrations of a male specimen.

Key words: *Heterognatha*, *Testudinaria*, transfer

Introduction

Numerous generic names are listed in the catalogs of Brignoli (1983) and Platnick (1989) as having “no entries”; that is, no taxonomic work was published on that genus during the period covered by the catalog. These genera are poorly known, have been poorly described and illustrated or not illustrated at all. In one of these genera, *Melychiopharis* Simon, the situation is even worse, since the only specimen recorded in the literature, the holotype of *M. cynips* Simon 1895, is lost. This genus was originally described in the family Araneidae, placed close to *Hypognatha* Guérin-Ménéville (Simon 1895: 907).

Some time ago a female of *M. cynips*, determined by B.A.M. Soares, was found by HWL in the Museu de Zoologia, Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil, and was illustrated. The illustrations and notes on this material were filed and forgotten until recently, during the preparation of an identification key for Neotropical araneid genera (Levi 2002). As part of that work, these notes and sketches were compared to the original description and Simon’s illustration, confirming Soares determination. Based on the general morphology of this species, which is extremely different from the araneid bauplan, Levi (2002) opted